

# Call For Papers: Management and Labour Studies

**Special Issue (Open Access): Consumption, Markets, Culture, and Communication from the Global South: Towards a Decolonial Consumer Culture Theory**

**Deadline for manuscript submission:**

1 February, 2027

This Special Issue seeks to advance a decolonial Consumer Culture Theory attentive to the communicative, political, material, ecological, and historical dimensions of consumption in the Global South. It invites contributions that question the presumed universality of dominant consumer theories and explore how consumption is constituted through coloniality, social hierarchy, communicative power, platformization, precarity, environmental crisis, and collective resistance. This Special Issue contributes to an emerging Global South intellectual project that reimagines consumption not as a universal marketplace activity, but as a historically situated struggle—a modernity project of the Global South's own (Chatterjee, 1997)— meaning, dignity, recognition, resources, visibility, citizenship, and survival.

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## Key Deadlines:

**Deadline for Proposed Abstract Submission:**

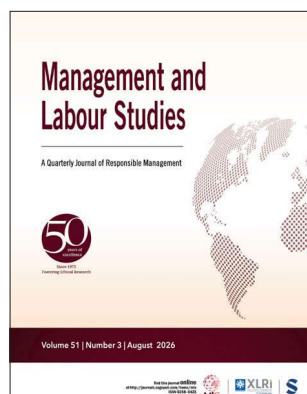
15 October 2026

**Last Date for Manuscript Submission:** 1 February 2027

**Proposed Publication of the Special Issue:** August 2027

## Submission Process:

A 300-word abstract of the proposed contribution should be sent directly to the Guest Editors, and a copy should be marked to [debasis@xlri.ac.in](mailto:debasis@xlri.ac.in) and [mlsmanager@xlri.ac.in](mailto:mlsmanager@xlri.ac.in) by September 30, 2026.



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**Background and Objectives of the Special Issue:**

Across the Global South, historically marginalized communities confront market systems shaped by the intersecting forces of coloniality, extractive capitalism, developmentalism, social hierarchy, and political exclusion. These communities are frequently incorporated into markets under profoundly unequal conditions: as precarious workers, indebted consumers, informal entrepreneurs, displaced populations, data subjects, or recipients of development interventions designed elsewhere. Their everyday negotiations with markets reveal forms of consumer resilience (Belk & Bhattacharyya, 2019) in response to the “Kafkaesque quagmire” confronting the poor and socially excluded (Belk & Ghoshal, 2017; Khare & Varman, 2017).

Dominant developmental imaginaries routinely reduce forests to mineral reserves, rivers to infrastructural assets, cultural practices to marketable heritage, labouring populations to human capital, and marginalized territories to spaces awaiting commercial incorporation. Yet communities confronting such processes do not merely experience markets passively. They generate alternative systems of value grounded in relationality, collective stewardship, ecological reciprocity, cultural memory, dignity, and social obligation. Their practices illuminate a critical insight for consumer culture scholarship: consumption is never merely about commodities or market exchange. It is fundamentally entangled with struggles over land, labour, identity, sovereignty, recognition, communication, citizenship, and the right to imagine alternative futures (Varman & Costa, 2013; Dutta, 2011; Ger & Belk, 1996).

These encounters with state-corporate developmentalism raise an urgent question for contemporary Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): How might consumption be theorized when viewed not from the standpoint of affluent consumers navigating abundance, but from the experiences of communities confronting dispossession, exclusion, precarity, and epistemic marginalization?

This question is particularly significant because consumer research continues to be shaped predominantly by Euro-American assumptions concerning markets, citizenship, modernity, individuality, and consumer agency (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Varman & Saha, 2009). Although CCT has significantly expanded understandings of consumption through analyses of identity projects, marketplace cultures, sociohistorical patterning, and ideological systems (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, 2015), scholars increasingly argue that the field remains marked by what Quijano and Ennis (2000) describe as the “coloniality of power”—the persistence of colonial classifications, epistemologies, and hierarchies within contemporary institutions and systems of knowledge production (Crockett, 2022; Crockett & Grier, 2021).

From this perspective, the Global South is not merely a geographical category. It constitutes an epistemological, political, and historical location from which dominant theories of markets, consumption, development, and modernity may be critically interrogated and reimagined (Mignolo, 2011; Escobar, 2018; Das et al., 2024). The Global South should therefore not be approached simply as an alternative empirical setting in which established theories are tested. Rather, its histories, intellectual traditions, political struggles, and market formations must be recognized as sources of theoretical knowledge in their own right.

Güliz Ger and Russell Belk (1996) have long challenged the universalizing tendencies of consumer research by demonstrating how consumption in less affluent societies is shaped by structural inequality, scarcity, informal economies, colonial histories, and aspirations generated under conditions of uneven globalization. Their notion of the “consumptionscapes of the less affluent world” remains foundational for understanding how consumers navigate market systems characterized by unequal access to material resources, institutional opportunities, and symbolic capital.

Building on these insights, Rohit Varman’s postcolonial analyses demonstrate how contemporary market systems remain embedded within colonial histories, nationalist projects, structural violence, and social hierarchies (Varman & Belk, 2009; Varman, 2018). Rather than functioning as neutral institutions that merely facilitate exchange, markets actively reproduce caste, race, class, gender, and other forms of inequality while simultaneously representing themselves as vehicles of freedom, mobility, choice, empowerment, and development.

Varman and Saha (2009) further argue that marketing knowledge itself often reproduces epistemic coloniality by treating Western market experiences as theoretically universal while relegating Global South realities to the status of cultural variations, contextual anomalies, or empirical exceptions. Such critiques compel consumer scholars to ask difficult disciplinary questions: Whose experiences become theory? Whose concepts are treated as universal? Whose histories are erased from the theoretical canon? Whose experiences are allowed to generate knowledge, and whose experiences merely become data?

These concerns resonate strongly with decolonial communication scholarship. Mohan J. Dutta's Culture-Centered Approach demonstrates how dominant communication systems frequently marginalize subaltern voices while privileging elite, technocratic, corporate, and state-centered narratives of development (Dutta, 2008, 2011). Through this lens, communication is not simply an instrument for disseminating information or facilitating market transactions. It is a contested terrain upon which power, knowledge, legitimacy, identity, and social value are continuously negotiated.

Broadfoot and Munshi (2007) similarly argue that communicative infrastructures—including those operating through markets, corporations, development institutions, advertising systems, and digital technologies—often normalize neoliberal rationalities while suppressing alternative forms of knowing, organizing, producing, and being. The negotiations and resistances of Dalit, racialized, gendered, postcolonial, migrant, religious, economically marginalized, and other subaltern subject positions may therefore be understood not only as political or economic struggles but also as communicative interventions that contest hegemonic representations of development, progress, respectability, entrepreneurship, and modernity.

Das et al. (2025), in their investigation of the marketing communication strategies of a Dalit-owned luxury circular fashion-accessory brand in India, examine how market-mediated communication may function as a site of subaltern resistance. Rather than treating markets solely as spaces of economic exchange, the study demonstrates how communicative infrastructures produce identities, meanings, aesthetic hierarchies, social classifications, and structures of visibility. At the same time, these infrastructures may be strategically appropriated to contest dominant meanings, transform stigmatized identities, and articulate alternative forms of cultural value.

The centrality of communication to market systems is further elaborated by Mumby and Plotnikof (2019), who demonstrate how contemporary capitalism operates through communicative processes that construct particular forms of subjectivity, legitimacy, organizational authority, and resistance (Das et al., 2023). Branding, advertising, organizational discourse, digital platforms, public relations, and consumer analytics are not secondary representations of economic activity. They are constitutive mechanisms through which markets are organized and normalized.

Market communications increasingly govern how consumers are classified, categorized, addressed, monitored, and incorporated into wider systems of communicative capitalism. Such processes are especially visible across the Global South, where global platform economies, data extraction, digital surveillance, algorithmic governance, platform labour, technological dependency, and financialization are rapidly transforming everyday consumption while reproducing long-standing inequalities (Varman & Vijay, 2022; Mumby & Plotnikof, 2019; Izberk-Bilgin & Belk, 2025).

Digital inclusion, for example, is frequently represented as an unqualified instrument of empowerment. Yet access to digital markets can simultaneously expose consumers and workers to surveillance, algorithmic discrimination, data extraction, misinformation, debt, precarious labour, and new forms of dependency. Similarly, entrepreneurial inclusion may provide visibility and livelihood opportunities while transferring structural risk from institutions to individuals. A decolonial CCT must therefore move beyond celebratory accounts of access and inclusion to examine the contradictory conditions under which marginalized actors are invited into markets.

Recent interventions within CCT also highlight the need to examine consumption through the interrelated lenses of structural exclusion and intersectional inequality. Gopaldas (2013) demonstrates how marketplace experiences are shaped by intersections of race, class, gender, caste, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, and other axes of marginalization. These categories do not operate independently. They combine to determine who can enter particular markets, whose consumption is considered legitimate, whose labour remains invisible, whose presence is stigmatized, and whose aspirations are treated as socially excessive or inappropriate.

Such concerns are particularly salient in Global South contexts, where caste (Mozahid, 2023), ethnicity (Hamlett et al., 2008), migration status (Askegaard & Özçaglar-Toulouse, 2011), and religion (Karabulut et al., 2020) profoundly shape market access, consumption opportunities, labour

relations, cultural representation, and experiences of inclusion and exclusion. Gender, sexuality, disability, regional location, linguistic identity, citizenship, and class location similarly influence whether individuals can participate in markets with autonomy, dignity, and security.

At the same time, CCT scholars demonstrate how historically marginalized communities mobilize consumption practices to negotiate belonging, dignity, recognition, and collective identity within exclusionary—and increasingly “capitalocene”—market systems (Izberk-Bilgin, 2010; Arnould & Thompson, 2026). Emerging scholarship shows how marginalized groups across the Global South strategically deploy consumption, branding, entrepreneurship, aesthetics, material culture, and communication to confront hegemony and reclaim cultural dignity through market-mediated visibility (Das et al., 2024, 2025; Meshram & Venkatraman, 2022).

These interventions extend broader CCT discussions of consumer identity projects by foregrounding structural inequality, collective resistance, historical violence, and political struggle rather than treating consumption primarily as a domain of individual self-expression. They further demonstrate that visibility within the marketplace is deeply ambivalent. Market visibility can produce recognition, community, and material opportunity, but it can also result in commodification, appropriation, surveillance, stereotyping, and incorporation into neoliberal systems that leave underlying structures of inequality intact.

Across the Global South, aspirational consumption frequently reflects wider struggles over recognition, mobility, legitimacy, and citizenship. Yet these aspirations emerge within uneven market structures characterized by precarity, exclusion, dispossession, and historical inequality. Mehita Iqani's work on African consumer cultures and postcolonial media economies reveals how visibility, aspiration, distinction, and value are differentially distributed across global consumer landscapes (Iqani, 2012, 2019). Through visual media, luxury discourses, advertising, branding, and popular culture, consumers are positioned within hierarchies of worth that reproduce enduring colonial geographies of power.

Aspirational markets should therefore not be interpreted solely as spaces through which consumers pursue upward mobility. They are also ideological systems that define what counts as success, beauty, respectability, modernity, and the “good life.” Such systems frequently delegitimize local, informal, collective, non-capitalist, or non-Western ways of living while elevating consumerist and individualized visions of progress. They may encourage subjects to interpret structural inequality as a personal failure of aspiration, skill, entrepreneurialism, or self-investment.

Yet the Global South also provides important opportunities for rethinking dominant assumptions concerning modernity itself. Özlem Sandıkcı and Güliz Ger's influential work on Islamic fashion demonstrates how alternative modernities emerge through localized negotiations among religion, identity, consumption, gender, and globalization (Sandıkcı & Ger, 2010). Rather than positioning non-Western consumers as delayed subjects attempting to imitate supposedly advanced Western trajectories, their work reveals how consumers actively construct hybrid, contested, and culturally grounded forms of modernity that challenge secular and Eurocentric models of development.

Likewise, Kravets and Sandıkcı (2014) demonstrate how emerging middle classes negotiate aspiration, ordinariness, inequality, and transnational market structures through forms of consumption that cannot be adequately understood through conventional Western frameworks. These studies remind us that modernity is neither singular nor universally experienced. It is unevenly produced through particular histories of colonialism, nationalism, religion, class formation, globalization, and cultural struggle.

Parallel efforts to provincialize marketing knowledge have emerged from Latin America. Marcus Wilcox Hemais and colleagues argue that marketing theory remains disproportionately shaped by Anglo-American epistemologies, resulting in the systematic marginalization of alternative intellectual traditions and forms of knowledge production (Hemais, 2025, 2026). Similarly, Rojas Gaviria and Preece (2023) call for the decolonization of academic and marketing knowledge by foregrounding subaltern, community-based, and historically excluded epistemologies that have remained peripheral to the discipline's theoretical canon.

Such interventions align with the broader decolonial critiques of Quijano and Ennis (2000), Mignolo (2011), and Wynter (2003), who argue that modernity and coloniality are inseparable historical processes. Modernity's claims to progress, rationality, development, universality, and civilization have been constituted through colonial violence, racial classification, dispossession, epistemic erasure, and the construction of a supposedly universal human subject modelled upon particular Western experiences.

The decolonization of CCT therefore cannot be accomplished merely by increasing the number of empirical studies situated outside Europe and North America. Nor can it be reduced to adding marginalized consumers to existing theoretical categories. Representational inclusion without epistemic transformation risks reproducing the very hierarchies it claims to contest. Decolonization requires sustained engagement with the concepts, histories, languages, struggles, and intellectual traditions through which Global South communities understand markets, value, exchange, identity, obligation, resistance, and collective life.

It also requires critical reflection on research practice. Consumer researchers must examine who defines research problems, who controls interpretive authority, which languages are recognized as theoretically meaningful, how communities participate in knowledge production, and who ultimately benefits from academic research. Methods that extract stories, images, cultural practices, or community knowledge without transforming unequal relations between researchers and researched may reproduce colonial forms of knowledge production even when conducted in the name of inclusion.

This Special Issue therefore seeks to advance a decolonial Consumer Culture Theory attentive to the communicative, political, material, ecological, and historical dimensions of consumption in the Global South. It invites contributions that question the presumed universality of dominant consumer theories and explore how consumption is constituted through coloniality, social hierarchy, communicative power, platformization, precarity, environmental crisis, and collective resistance.

We encourage contributions that move beyond representational inclusion and engage in what Mignolo (2009) terms “epistemic disobedience.” Such work should treat marginalized experiences not simply as empirical material to be interpreted through established theories, but as generative sources of conceptual innovation, disciplinary critique, and alternative world-making.

We particularly welcome studies examining caste and marketplace exclusion; racialized and ethnicized consumer cultures; gendered and sexual inequalities; migration and diaspora; digital colonialism; platform capitalism; algorithmic governance; informal economies; poverty and consumer resilience; communicative struggles over development; ethical and sustainable consumption; anti-consumption movements; consumer activism; climate justice; decolonial entrepreneurship; market-mediated resistance; alternative economies; and culturally grounded understandings of value, dignity, responsibility, and modernity.

Ultimately, this Special Issue contributes to an emerging Global South intellectual project that reimagines consumption not as a universal marketplace activity, but as a historically situated struggle—a modernity project of the Global South’s own (Chatterjee, 1997)—over meaning, dignity, recognition, resources, visibility, citizenship, and survival.

Markets do not simply distribute commodities and services. They distribute power, legitimacy, precarity, mobility, recognition, and possible futures. They determine whose labour becomes visible, whose culture becomes valuable, whose knowledge is recognized, whose aspirations are encouraged, and whose lives remain disposable. If Consumer Culture Theory is to remain intellectually and politically relevant in an era marked by ecological crisis, democratic fragility, platform capitalism, neoliberal hegemony, extractive development, and widening inequality, it must learn to theorize **from** the margins rather than merely producing knowledge **about** them.

### **Special Issue Themes**

*The following themes are suggestive and not exhaustive.*

#### **1. Decolonizing Consumer Culture Theory and Marketing Knowledge**

- Coloniality of consumption
- Epistemic justice and epistemic disobedience
- Southern theories and alternative market epistemologies
- Provincializing Euro-American consumer knowledge
- Decolonial and postcolonial approaches to markets
- Community-based and marginalized forms of knowledge production

## **2. Community-Based Market Futures and Alternative Economies**

- Community economies and cooperative systems
- Collective stewardship and relational value
- Resource extraction and territorial dispossession
- Solidarity economies and alternative exchange systems
- Community entrepreneurship
- Non-capitalist and post-capitalist market imaginaries

## **3. Caste, Race, Ethnicity, and Marketplace Exclusion**

- Dalit consumer cultures
- Anti-caste branding and market-mediated resistance
- Racialized and ethnicized consumption
- Marketplace discrimination
- Structural exclusion and social hierarchy
- Dignity, recognition, and consumer citizenship

## **4. Communication, Branding, and Subaltern Resistance**

- Market-mediated activism
- Communicative infrastructures
- Counter-hegemonic narratives
- Decolonial branding
- Consumer resistance and anti-consumption
- Alternative visualities and communicative practices
- The politics of market visibility

## **5. Digital Colonialism, Platform Capitalism, and Data Justice**

- Artificial intelligence and algorithmic governance
- Surveillance capitalism and data extraction
- Platform labour and digital precarity
- Digital inequality and exclusion
- Technological dependency
- Algorithmic discrimination
- Data sovereignty and data justice
- Digital resistance and counter-platform practices

## **6. Gender, Sexuality, and Intersectional Consumer Cultures**

- Feminist consumption and feminist marketplaces
- Queer and transgender consumer cultures
- Reproductive and care labour
- Gendered market inequalities
- Sexual citizenship and consumption
- Intersectionality and marketplace inclusion
- Gendered entrepreneurialism and commodification

## **7. Migration, Diaspora, and Transnational Consumer Identities**

- Mobility and belonging
- Migration and consumer citizenship
- Diasporic consumption
- Remittances and transnational family economies
- Refugee and migrant marketplace experiences
- Border regimes and consumption
- Transnational cultural identities

## **8. Informal Economies, Poverty, and Consumer Resilience**

- Street markets and informal retail
- Survival consumption
- Precarity and indebtedness
- Financial exclusion
- Alternative exchange and credit systems
- Everyday resistance
- Informal entrepreneurship
- Consumer resilience and subservience

## **9. Climate Justice, Sustainability, and Ecological Consumption**

- Environmental and climate justice
- Degrowth and post-growth consumption
- Sustainable and ethical consumption
- Climate adaptation and unequal vulnerability
- Regenerative and circular economies
- Extractive capitalism
- Ecological communication
- Green colonialism and the commodification of sustainability

## **10. Media, Material Culture, and Alternative Modernities**

- Visual cultures and advertising
- Media representation and market visibility
- Aspirational consumption
- Religion and consumption
- Heritage, memory, and material culture
- Multiple and alternative modernities
- Postcolonial identities
- Luxury, distinction, and unequal geographies of value

## **11. Development, Neoliberalism, and Consumer Citizenship**

- Market-led development
- Financialization and indebted subjectivities
- Entrepreneurship discourses
- Neoliberal responsabilization
- Development communication
- Consumer citizenship and political exclusion
- Corporate developmentalism
- Markets, governance, and structural violence

## 12. Decolonial Research Methods and Knowledge Production

- Participatory and community-centered methodologies
- Researcher positionality
- Epistemic extraction
- Language and translation in consumer research
- Collaborative knowledge production
- Ethics of researching marginalized communities
- Decolonial ethnography
- Reflexivity, representation, and interpretive authority

### Project Schedule

**15 September 2026:** Proposed abstracts due for the Special Issue

**1 February 2027:** Full manuscripts due

**15 July 2027:** Proposed publication of the Special Issue

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